I.2 Accreditation terminology

The following key terms are used throughout this document.

CHEA	The Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Officially recognizes the American Library Association as the accrediting agency for master's-level programs in library and information studies.
COA	The Committee on Accreditation - The autonomous committee that administers the accreditation review process of educational programs for the profession of librarianship.
Comprehensive Review	Periodic review of a program by the COA to evaluate a program's compliance with the *Standards*. The review process includes submission of a Self-Study, a two-day on-site review by an External Review Panel, and a COA accreditation decision.
ERP	The External Review Panel - A group of two to six library and information faculty and practitioners appointed by the COA through the Office for Accreditation to visit a program and verify information in the Self-Study. Panelists are also vetted by the program to avoid any conflicts of interest.
ERP Chair	Refers to the chairperson of the External Review Panel (ERP).
LIS	Library and Information Studies - In the context of ALA-COA communications, LIS has this specific reference. In other contexts, including some ALA-accredited programs, LIS may refer to Library and Information Science, but this is not the specific meaning in the context of COA accreditation.
OA Director	Refers to the Director of the Office for Accreditation.
Program	Refers only to the program(s) of study leading to an accredited LIS master's degree. A school may offer degree programs not accredited by the ALA, such as undergraduate, other master's, post-master's, or doctoral programs. The ALA Committee on Accreditation accredits programs, not schools.
Program Head	Refers to the administrator in charge (dean, director, chair, coordinator) of the accredited program or the program seeking accreditation. The program head has primary responsibility for accreditation business and is the main contact.
School	Refers to the administrative unit offering one or more programs in library and information studies.
Self-Study	Document (formerly called Program Presentation) prepared by the program as part of the comprehensive review process. This document describes the program; how it meets the ALA *Standards for Accreditation*; analyzes its strengths, weaknesses, and challenges; and sets forth the program's plans and goals for future development and continued compliance with the *Standards*.

Standards	Refers to *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*, the essential features of accredited library and information studies programs. The *Standards* are developed by the COA and approved by the ALA Council.
Visit or site visit	Refers to the part of a comprehensive review in which members of an ERP visit the school and institution to validate and augment the information contained in the Self-Study. Most visits are conducted as on-site visits in which members of the ERP travel to the program location. This document is written from that perspective. However, alternative approaches, such as virtual visits, may also be used, following consultation with the Program Head, the OA Director, and the ERP Chair.

A comprehensive glossary of accreditation terminology is available on the Office for Accreditation website.

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